

PLACES OF PUBLIC AMUSEMENT.

THEATRES AND CONCERT ROOMS.

IF labor for labor's sake is against nature, as Locke says, amusement for amusement's sake is equally unnatural. Amusement that has to be sought becomes labor, while labor becomes an amusement when properly directed. A Down East captain said to his crew, "Come, men, knock off work and go to piling staves." We seek amusement in a similar manner, by change of occupation, and, in dancing all night for pleasure, we work much harder than we have done during the day at our regular business. Amusements are as often called recreations, which is, perhaps, a better term; and the great point to be determined is what kind of amusement will yield the greatest amount of enjoyment, or recreation, affording the overtaxed mind and body opportunity to recover their elasticity after having been subjected to too tight a strain. A moment's thought bestowed upon this subject will at once tend to the conclusion that amusements must be as varied as the employments of the people to be amused. Our friend Snip, the tailor, whose employment confines him six days out of seven to his shop-board, as well as Cocker, the book-keeper, can conceive of no more delightful recreation than a target excursion or a party to the Fishing Banks; while Sam.

Jones, the fisherman, and Bob Brown, the omnibus driver, imagine that the highest heaven of enjoyment might be found in the gallery of a theatre, where the air would be hot, and the shifting scenes as unlike as possible to any thing they had ever seen from a smack's deck or the top of an omnibus. The amusements of a people, therefore, while they must be congenial to their habits, must also be antagonistical to their employments; farmers' boys would never go into the fields for recreation, nor students to a lecture room; and hence the impossibility of transplanting national pastimes, or even of reviving them when they have fallen into disuse. If people are let alone, they will find amusements best adapted to their necessities, and therefore any legal restraints placed upon the natural tendency of a people in seeking for recreations must be productive of mischief.

Bull-baitings, and cock-fightings, and the sports of the turf, are revolting to certain classes of people, but they are essential means of recreation to certain other classes, who, when deprived of such legitimate amusements will seek the gratification of their instincts in a more objectionable manner. Instead of boisterous enjoyments in the fields, they will create riots, mobs,

and rows in the streets. On board of men of war it is the custom to pipe all hands to mischief, occasionally, when the crew have been a long time on shipboard, that the necessity for abandonment and fun may be spent in harmless excitement. But for such safety valves, the irritation of constant restraint would lead to insubordination and mutiny. Commanders of fleets and armies make timely arrangements for the recreation of the men under them, and it would be wise in our municipal governors if they would do the same.

In most of the despotic countries of Europe, the monarch finds it to his interest to provide means of recreation to the people free of cost, and these are generally on a scale of inverse liberality to the illiberality of the government. In no other part of the world are the amusements of the people more generously attended to than in France, while in no other does the individual enjoy so little of his individuality.

In this happy country of ours, where all the natural instincts are allowed their utmost expansion, it is very remarkable that the amusements of the people are the only affairs that are hampered by statutory restrictions. One may follow any business he likes, embrace any religion, join any party, or engage in any enterprise; but the law fixes the boundary of his amusements and forbids his recreating himself in certain ways. In the State of Connecticut, the law prohibits all amusements and recreations of a theatrical or dramatic nature; Shakespeare may be read in the parlor, or from the pulpit; but to present Shakespeare's plays in the way they were intended by their author to be represented, is unlawful and would subject those guilty of so wrong an act to fine and imprisonment. Horse jockeying is an indigenous trade in Connecticut, but riding horses for the amusement of others is there an interdicted employment. In the State of Massachusetts, the laws are less rigorous, and Shakespeare's plays may be represented according to their author's intentions, by the payment of a fee and under a special license, on any night of the week but Saturday and Sunday. On those two evenings Shakespeare is interdicted as an amusement in the good Old Bay State. In this city, a man may establish a dozen whisky distilleries, or manufacture fire-arms, or quack medicines with perfect freedom, without fee or license; but no one can establish a place for theatrical amusements without a special license and paying for the privilege. Every theatre, and opera house, and circus in New-York

has to pay a yearly fee which is appropriated to the use of some public charity.

The theatre is one of the greatest anomalies of modern civilization. It has been an established institution in all civilized countries, in the face of an opposition lasting through 500 years, and it still stands. Next to the sports of the chase it is the oldest of all human recreations, and claims for its votaries the loftiest geniuses that have blessed mankind. The instincts of the people demand its pleasures, and it will find a footing wherever it is not excluded by law. The taste for the stage is not merely a love of tinsel and inexplicable dumb show—it is the universal desire to see the bright side of the world, and to travel out of ourselves into the airy regions of poetry and romance.

The persecution it has met, has been deserved, where it fell upon the immoralities unhappily united with it: but the indiscriminating hostility to all dramatic representations of human life, as something iniquitous *per se*, is a mere folly, inexcusable were it not for something worthy in the feeling from which it sprung. Had the stage been rescued to the purposes of virtue, instead of having suffered outlawry among the good, a powerful instrument would have been saved to the better side. Not only for the purposes of amusement, but of mental culture, dramatic show is a natural and efficient means. Regardless or thoughtless of this, good men have let it decline to base uses and then blamed the evil which in some measure at least, they might have prevented. Were every delicious taste or art abandoned on the same ground as the drama, our life would be bereft of the benefit and solace of the whole of them. There are great difficulties, no doubt, in giving to the stage a high and pure character—but are they insuperable? Is there any reason why this as well as any other natural taste may not be purged and made a "minister of grace?" If there be, still let us discriminate between the thing itself and our own weakness.

It is a strange circumstance that while music, painting, poetry, elocution, and dancing, are not only considered as harmless, but as elevating and beneficial arts, in themselves, yet, when they are all combined in the production of a drama they are regarded as fit only to be anathematized. The church, too, combines in its ceremonials all these arts but the last, and, in all Catholic countries eclipses the feeble attempts of the stage, in their combination to dazzle the senses and thrill the imagination. Of course there can be no comparison between the theatre and the

Church, because it is the province of the one to amuse, and the other to instruct the believer in the solemn mysteries of eternal salvation. The stage, too, professes to be moral, and the punishment of vice is the inevitable end of all dramas. There is no such *lusus* as an immoral drama. It is the delight of the coarsest natures to see poetical justice dealt out to the wicked, and the sufferings of the virtuous form the great staple of all tragedies. There is nothing that so certainly commands the tears of an audience, as the undeserved calamities of the innocent. One of our theatres has been reaping a harvest of nightly benefits by exhibiting the untimely death of a little girl, and the hardships of a virtuous slave. The public go to the National Theatre, in one of the dirtiest streets of the city, where they sit in not over-clean boxes, amid faded finery, and tarnished gilding, to weep over Little Eva and Uncle Tom. It takes us back to the days Æschylus, and convinces us that the love of the drama is as strong as it ever was, and that it must remain for ever while men have hearts capable of being moved by human suffering. The descent from Prometheus to Uncle Tom, dramatically considered, is not a very violent one, nor so long as some may imagine.

It is the fashion with a certain class to speak of the theatre as having outlived its time, and being no longer necessary to the people; but a reference to the history of the stage, and an investigation into the condition of our theatres would prove that the theatre, as we observed just now, was never before in so thriving a condition as at present. Players are no longer vagabonds by act of parliament, nor are they exposed to any legal indignities here on the ground of their profession. An actor may now be buried in consecrated ground in France, but this privilege was denied his poor corpse in the days of Molière. Some of our actors are men of large fortune, and our actresses make themselves independent and retire to private life while they are yet young; and our managers become millionaires, and men of social standing. It is said that the stage pays well as a profession to those who are tolerably well qualified for it, and men of capital are not averse to investing their money in theatrical property. There are many pains-taking, well-intentioned men who have gone upon the stage, as coolly and deliberately as other men have gone to the bar or the pulpit, as a business pursuit, and have maintained themselves and families respectably by enacting the parts of "heavy fathers," and filling the posts of "utility

men." It must be a sorry business, to be sure, but hardly worse than being a drudge in any other profession. The vagabondage of the theatrical profession, which is generally supposed to be the necessary condition of all its members, is rather imaginary than real. Actors are, generally, when off the stage, the most matter of fact and serious people to be seen; many of them have other callings, they engage in trade, or manufacturing, and perform the parts of good citizens with as much success as those of the stage villains and heroes whom they personate for a living. It was lately revealed to the public that Salvi, the fascinating tenor of the Italian Opera, when not employed before the foot lights in fancy costume, was superintending his large soap-boiling and tallow candle establishment on Staten Island—a revelation, that may hereafter mar the effect of his *spírito gentil* in the ears of the listeners who have so often been charmed by his tender voice. But it is not every actor who has the good fortune to be connected with so substantial a business as that of Salvi's; the actual life of too many presents a melancholy contrast to the stage splendors with which they are associated in the minds of the public, who imagine it is all fun and hilarity behind the scenes.

Mrs. Mowatt, in her autobiography, gives some instructive glimpses of the private life of the heroes of the stage, and bears her testimony to the general good character of the greater part of the members of the profession which she joined as a means of honorable independence. Even in the profession of the ballet dancer, which is looked upon as the lowest and most degraded of the whole class of industrials who draw their support from the theatre, she says "there is nothing necessarily demoralizing and degrading," and she gives a slight sketch, but perfect as far as it goes, of a poor ballet girl, who displayed such a heroic spirit in the discharge of her humble duties, that her history should be sufficient to ennoble her despised occupation. Mrs. Mowatt states that she knew this real heroine of the stage, and had the opportunity of watching her conduct for several years.

"She had been educated as a dancer from infancy. She had been on the stage all her life; had literally grown up behind the scenes of a theatre. Her parents were respectable, though it is difficult to define their position in the social scale. At the time I knew her, her mother was paralytic and bedridden. The father was enfeebled by age, and could only earn a

pittance by copying law papers. Georgina, the ballet girl, their only child, by her energetic exertions, supplied the whole wants of the family. And what were those exertions? The mind of the most imaginative reader could hardly picture what I know to be a reality. Georgina's parents kept no servant; she discharged the entire duties of the household—cooking, washing, sewing, every thing. From daylight to midnight not a moment of her time was unemployed. She must be at rehearsal every morning at ten o'clock, and she had two miles and a half to walk to the theatre. Before that hour she had the morning meal of her parents to prepare, her marketing to accomplish, her household arrangements for the day to make; if early in the week, her washing; if in the middle of the week, her ironing; if at the close, her sewing; for she made all her own and her mother's dresses. At what hour in the morning must she have risen?

"Her ten o'clock rehearsal lasted from two to four hours—more frequently the latter. But watch her in the theatre, and you never found her hands idle. When she is not on the stage, you were sure of discovering her in some quiet corner—knitting lace, cutting grate aprons out of tissue paper, making artificial flowers, or embroidering articles of fancy work, by the sale of which she added to her narrow means. From rehearsal she hastened home to prepare the midday meal of her parents and attend to her mother's wants. After dinner she received a class of children, to whom she taught dancing for a trifling sum. If she had half an hour to spare, she assisted her father in copying law papers. Then tea must be prepared, and her mother arranged comfortably for the night. Her long walk to the theatre must be accomplished at least half an hour before the curtain rose—barely time to make her toilet. If she was belated by her home avocations, she was compelled to run the whole distance. I have known this to occur. Not to be ready for the stage would have subjected her to a forfeit. Between the acts, or when she was not on the stage, there she sat again, in her snug corner of the greenroom, dressed as a fairy, or a maid of honor, or a peasant, or a page, with a bit of work in her hands, only laying down the needle, which her fingers actually made fly, when she was summoned by the call boy, or required to change her costume by the necessities of the play. Sometimes she was at liberty at ten o'clock, but oftener not until half-past eleven, and then there was the long

walk home before her. Her mother generally awoke at the hour when Georgina was expected, and a fresh round of filial duties were to be performed. Had not the wearied limbs which that poor ballet girl laid upon her couch earned their sweet repose? Are there many whose refreshment is so deserved—whose rising up and lying down are rounded by a circle so holy?

"No one ever heard her murmur. Her fragile form spoke of strength overtaken; it was more careworn than her face. That had always a look of busy serenity off the stage, a softly-animated expression when occupied before the audience in the duties of her profession. She had a ready smile when addressed—a meek reply when rudely chided by the churlish ballet master or despotic stage manager. Many a time I have seen the tears dropping upon her work; but if they were noticed, she would brush them away, and say she was a fool and cried for nothing. Her devotion to her parents was the strongest impulse of her nature. In her early youth she had been engaged to a young man, a musician, belonging to the orchestra. They had been betrothed for several years. Some fairer face, though he could scarcely have found a *sweeter*, had rendered him faithless. She bore her deep sorrow with that lovely submission which elevates and purifies the spirit, but gave her heart away no more. The breath of slander had never shadowed her name. Younger and gayer girls in the theatre used to designate her as the 'old maid,' but this was the hardest word that any one ever applied to Georgina. Was not such a heart as hers what Elizabeth Barrett Browning has described as

'A fair, still house, well kept,
Which humble thoughts had swept,
And holy prayers made clean?'

"Her answer to a sympathizing 'How weary you must be at night!' was, 'Yes; but I am so thankful that I have health to get through so much. What would become of my poor mother or of my father, if I fell ill?'

"How many are there who can render up such an account of their stewardship as this poor girl may give in the hereafter? How many can say with her that life has been

'One perpetual growth
Of heavenward enterprise?'

"And this flower blossomed within the walls of a theatre—was the indigenous growth of that theatre—a *wallflower*, if you like—but still sending up the rich



Lafayette Hotel—Front of Metropolitan Hall.

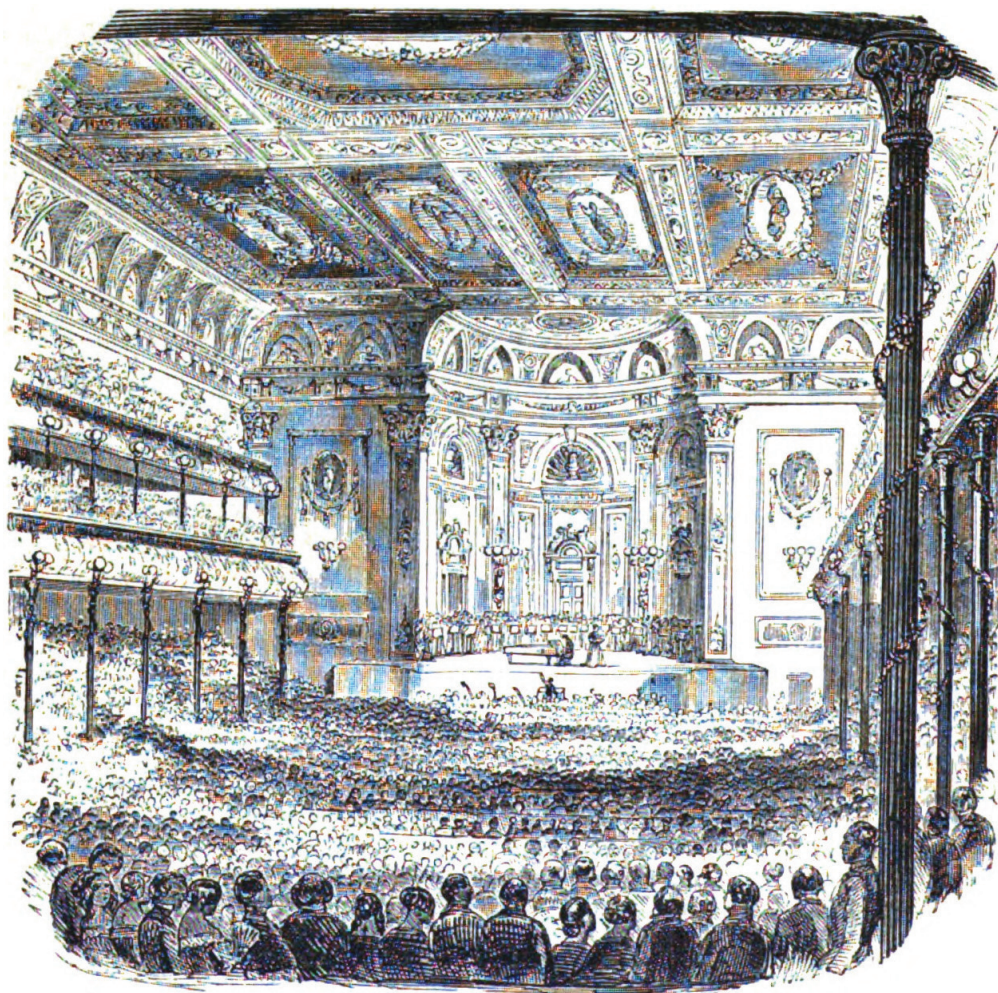
fragrance of gratitude to Him by whose hand it was fashioned. To the eyes of the Pharisee, who denounces all dramatic representations, while with self-applauding righteousness he boldly approaches the throne of mercy, this 'ballet girl,' like the poor publican, stood 'afar off.' To the eyes of the great judge, which stood the nearer?"

The theatrical business in New-York has, until within a short time, been almost entirely in the hands of Englishmen, and even the majority of the players are still foreigners, and it is doubtless owing in a

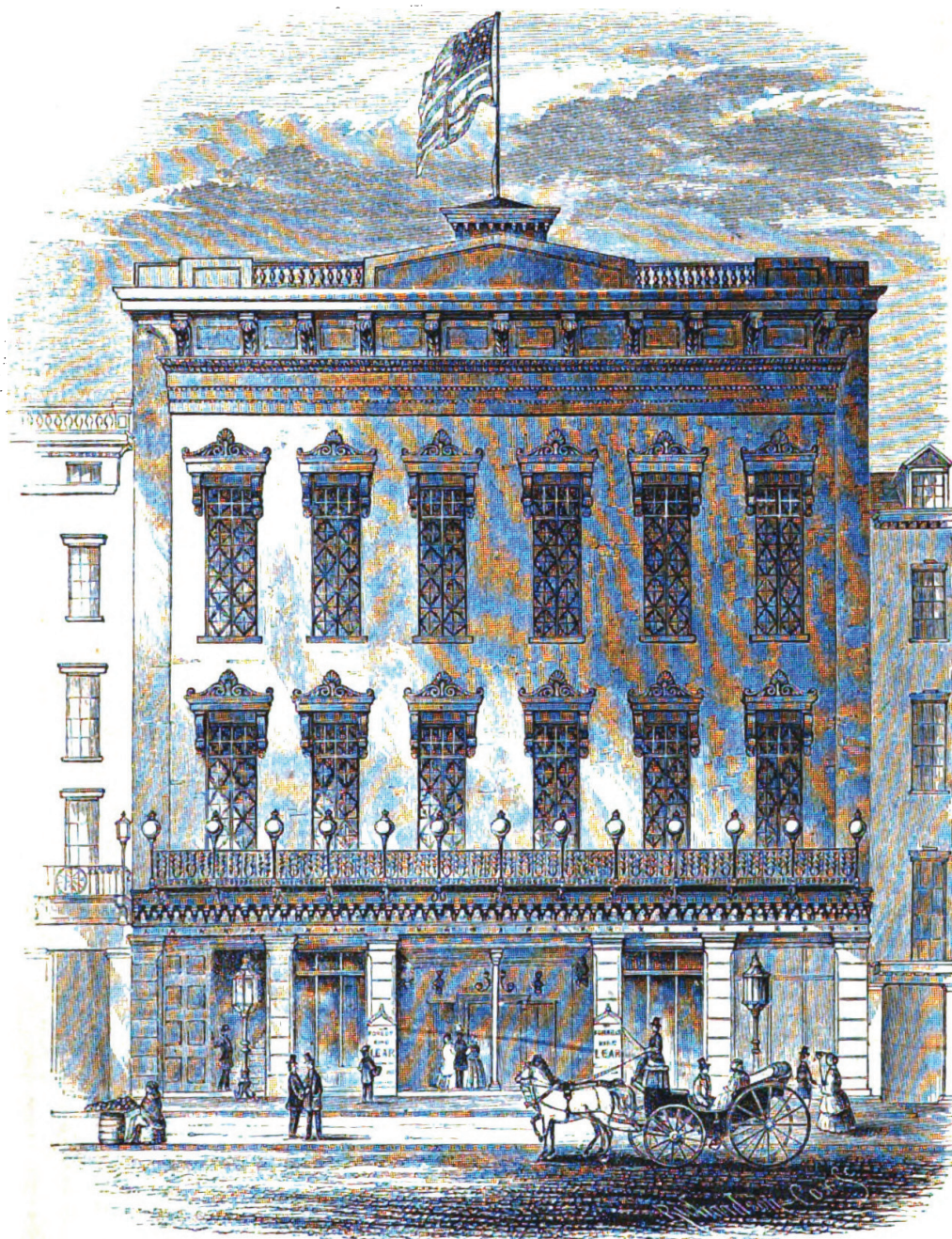
great degree to this fact, that the stage has continued to lag in the rear of all other institutions on this side of the Atlantic; it has not appealed to the sympathies and tastes of the people; the actors have been aliens, and the pieces they performed have all been foreign; to go inside of our theatres was like stepping out of New-York into London, where the scene of nearly all the comedies presented is laid. English lords and ladies, English squires, clodhoppers, and Cockneys; English rogues, English heroes, and English humors form the staple of nearly all the

plays put upon our stage. The actors and actresses speak with a foreign accent, and all their allusions and asides are foreign. The only places of amusement where the entertainments are indigenous are the African Opera Houses, where native American vocalists, with blackened faces, sing national songs, and utter none but native witticisms. These native theatricals, which resemble the national plays of Italy and Spain, more than the performances of the regular theatres, are among the best frequented and most profitable places of amusement in New-York. While every attempt to establish an Italian Opera here, though originating with the wealthiest and best educated classes, has resulted in bankruptcy, the Ethiopian Opera has flourished like a green bay tree, and some of the conductors of these establishments have become millionaires. It was recently proved that one of the "Bone soloists" attached to a company of Ethiopian minstrels, had spent twenty-seven thousand dollars of his income within

two years. It is surprising that the managers of our theatres do not take a hint from the success of the Ethiopian Opera, and adapt their performances to the public tastes and sympathies. The manager of the National Theatre, one of the least attractive of all the places of public amusement, has made a fortune by putting Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom* upon his stage. *Uncle Tom*, as a drama, has hardly any merit, it is rudely constructed, without any splendors of scenery and costume, or the fascinations of music; the dialogue is religious, and the Bible furnishes its chief illustrations; but it is American in tone, all the allusions have a local significance, and the sympathies of the people are directly appealed to. The result is an unheard-of success, such as has never before been accorded to any theatrical performance in the New World. The manager of the National Theatre is himself an American, and nearly all his corps of actors are also natives, and though he only aims at the tastes of the lowest



Interior of Metropolitan Hall.



Broadway Theatre.

classes of the people, yet his theatre has been daily and nightly filled with the élite of our society, who are willing to endure all the inconveniences which a visit to the place imposes for the sake of enjoying an emotion, such as neither the preaching of their clergy, nor the singing of Italian artists could create. A slight reaction of popular favor towards the theatre has been caused by the presence of Mr. Bourcicault among us, the author of

London Assurance. To witness the first representation of a new comedy by a popular English dramatist has attracted a class of people to the theatre who have not been in the habit of frequenting it.

But Mr. Bourcicault's comedies are not calculated to revive an interest in the stage; they are artificial in their construction, their characters are mere conventionalities of the stage, the dialogue lacks sincerity and wit, and the entire tone and

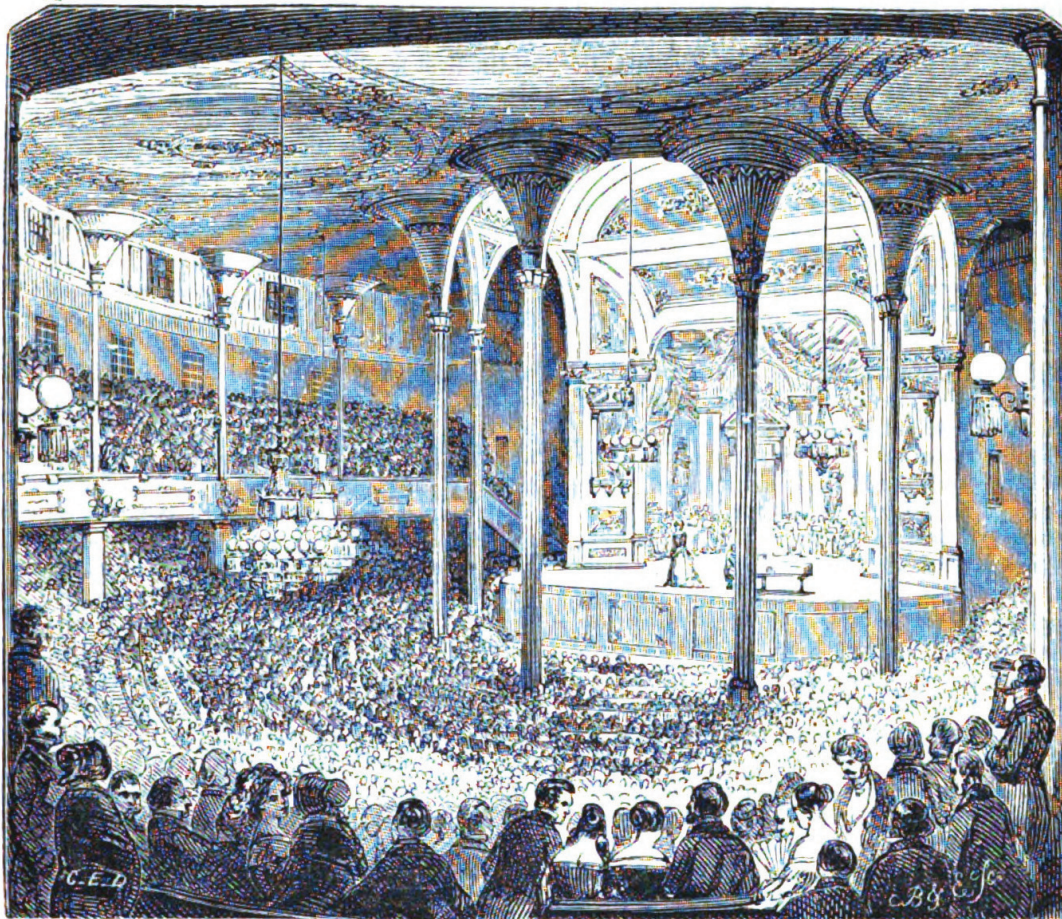
sentiment of his plays are foreign to us. He nowhere gives that touch of nature which makes the whole world kin, but compels us all the while to feel that we are assisting at an alien performance. There is one point, however, he may claim the credit of having established; he has greatly improved the upholstery of the stage, and, by the introduction of "real furniture" transformed the before bare-looking scenes of interiors into something which bears a recognizable resemblance to a modern drawing-room. Mr. Bourcicault is the most successful of the present class of English dramatists; but, the regular drama died with Sheridan; since the *School for Scandal* was produced, there has been no play written in England which stands the remotest chance of being known by name half a century hence. The regular drama is as foreign now to the wants

of the theatre, as the Greek tragedy, or the mediaeval mysteries. The theatre survives for other purposes than the representation of the drama; its presentations are merely sensuous, and not intellectual; Shakespeare is only endured for the sake of the star actor who impersonates the one character suited to his physical powers. The pieces which attract audiences and fill the treasury are as un-Shakespearian as possible. Tableaux, burlesques, thrilling melo-dramas, ballets, spectacles, horses, dwarfs, giants, rope-dancers, any thing that is monstrous and wonderful, form now the great attractions of the theatres, and any thing is considered as "legitimate" by the public, which affords amusement, and as proper, by the manager, which fills his house.

The lecture-room has now become a kind of compromise between the theatre



Bowery Theatre.



Interior of Castle Garden.

and the Church, it is a neutral ground, upon which all parties and conditions may, and do meet, and the peripatetic star lecturer occupies nearly the same position which Roscius did in the early days of the stage. The greatest achievements in poetry are the plays which were never intended for print; and, doubtless, the best additions to our literature will be the lectures which were only written to amuse an audience, and not intended for publication in another form.

There are innumerable places of recreation in such cities as New-York, which are not properly entitled to be classed under the head of places of public amusement, which we are considering now. The theatre has always been, and still is, the principal place of public amusement, and, though its character has greatly changed, and its frequenters are no longer of the class who once gave it its chief support, it occupies too prominent a place in the social organization of our great towns to be overlooked by professed moralists and religious teachers. Its existence, and the fact of its being frequented

by immense numbers of people whose morals need looking after, should be sufficiently strong reasons for the clergy, and all others who are by virtue of their office public teachers, to exert themselves to render it as little harmful as possible. To stand outside and denounce the theatre without knowing any thing of its interior, is not the true way to improve it. The representation of moral, and even religious plays has been found not only very effective upon the audiences who attend upon them, but profitable to the manager who brings them out.

As religious novels form a very considerable part of the popular books of the day, we see no reason why religious dramas should not also form an important part of theatrical entertainments. The fact that such a drama as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* can be represented two hundred nights in succession, at one of the lowest theatres in New-York, converting the place into a kind of conventicle, and banishing from it the degraded class, whose presence has been one of the strongest objections to the theatre which has been made by moralists,

is sufficient to show that religious plays, like religious novels, may be pressed into the service of education with powerful effect. It is stated by Mrs. Mowatt, in her autobiography, from which we have already quoted, that in the catalogue of English dramatic authors there are the names of two hundred clergymen. But we imagine that none of these have written any religious plays. There are six regular theatres in New-York, which are open nearly every night in the year, excepting Sundays, for dramatic representations, and the public that sit night after night with a fortitude and good nature to us incredible, to see the *School for Scandal* and the *Lady of Lyons* would be but too happy to vary their amusements by a religious drama, if it were only new and intelligible. The chief of our city theatres, which claims to be the Metropolitan, since the destruction of the Old Park, is the Broadway. It is a very large house, capable of seating some 4300 persons. It was built by Col. Alvah Mann, a great circus proprietor, who ruined himself by the speculation, and is now the property of Mr. Raymond, another millionaire of the ring. Broadway is a "star house," and depends more upon the attraction of a single eminent performer than upon the general character of its performances, or its stock company; and it is at one time a ballet, another a tragedian, again an opera, then a spectacle, that forms its attractions. Forrest has here appeared one hundred nights in succession; here too Lola Montez made her debut in America, and any wandering monstrosity is seized upon by the manager to secure an audience. The regular drama, excepting with the attraction of a star, is found to be a regular bore to the public, and a regular loss to the house. The manager of the Broadway, E. A. Marshall, Esq., is neither an actor nor a dramatist, but simply a man of business; and, besides the Broadway Theatre, he is also proprietor of the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, and of the theatres in Baltimore and Washington. Neither the exterior nor interior of this house is at all creditable to the city; it has a shabby and temporary look externally, and the ornamentation of the auditorium is both mean and tawdry. No class of people seem to frequent it for recreation but only to gratify an excited curiosity.

The "Bowery," which is the oldest of all the theatres in New-York, is about the same dimensions as the Broadway, but has a stage of much greater depth, and better adapted to spectacle. It is

frequented chiefly by the residents of the eastern side of the city, and its pit is generally filled with boisterous representatives of the first families in the city—that is, the first in the ascending scale. The performances at the Bowery are, of course, adapted to the tastes of its audiences, who have a keen relish for patriotic devotion, terrific combats, and thrilling effects, and are never so jubilant as when suffering virtue triumphs over the machinations of persecuting villainy. It was for such audiences as these, with a slight infusion of better natures, that Shakspeare wrote his dramas, and for whose amusement he was willing to personate the humblest of his creations. The present edifice is the fourth that has been erected on the same ground, since the first one was erected in the year 1826, the others having been destroyed by fire. The late proprietor of the Bowery Theatre amassed a fortune here, and left the establishment to his heirs, to whom it now belongs. It is understood to be a very profitable concern, as it has been from its first erection. It was in the Bowery Theatre where Madame Hutin, the first opera dancer seen on this side of the Atlantic made her *debut*, and where the first ballet was performed, one of the troupe being the then unknown Celeste. It was here, too, that Malibran made her first appearance on the stage after her unfortunate marriage, and filled the house with the beauty, fashion, and intellect of the city. Such audiences have never since graced its pit and galleries. It was on the stage of the Bowery that Forrest achieved his greatest triumphs, and laid the foundation of his fame. But it is long since stars of such magnitude have shed their sweet influences on Bowery audiences.

Niblo's is not, strictly, a theatre, but a show house, open to any body that may choose to hire it. It is one night a circus, another an Italian Opera House; then a dramatic temple, and then a lecture room. It is called a "garden," but it is one of the roomiest, best constructed, and most convenient of all the places of amusement in the city, and is unexceptionable in its character. Its interior decorations are very inferior to the other theatres, but it has the great advantage of being clean and well ventilated. The entrance to it, through the Metropolitan Hotel, is extremely elegant and capacious. Under the same roof, within the walls of the same hotel is Niblo's Saloon, a splendid room used for concerts and balls. The whole ground now covered by the Metropolitan Hotel was once Niblo's Garden, and the theatre was merely an appendage

to it to draw custom to the refreshment tables.

There are two theatres in New-York, and but two which are devoted exclusively to the performance of the regular drama; these are Burton's in Chambers-street, and Wallack's in Broadway. Burton's Theatre was, originally, a bath-house, and was afterwards turned into an Italian Opera House, in the management of which a good deal of money was lost, and Palmo, the proprietor ruined. Burton then took possession of it, and made a fortune. It was the first instance in which a theatre in this city had fallen into the hands of a manager of scholarly attainments and artistic instincts, and the result of his management shows what may be effected by talent turned in the right direction. Mr. Burton has not only enriched himself, but has done the public a service by affording them a place of harmless and elevating amusement. One of the first pieces that he put upon his stage was Milton's *Comus*, which gave the public assurance that the new manager was a person of education and refinement; and the uniform good judgment shown by him in the pieces he has selected, and the superior manner in which they have been costumed, have made his theatre a superior place of intellectual entertainment for people of educated tastes. Mr. Burton is one of the best low comedians, on the stage, and is, himself, one of the strongest attractions of his theatre. But, like a true artist, he never hesitates to take a subordinate part, when it is necessary to give completeness and effect to a performance. He has a devoted attachment to his art, and goes through with his nightly performances, sometimes appearing in three different pieces, with a degree of vigor, and careful attention to all the minute accessories of his part, which we could only look for in an enthusiastic acolyte in the temple of art. Mr. Burton is an Englishman; but, unlike most of his countrymen, he left his native country behind him, when he crossed the Atlantic, and became thoroughly American in his feelings. He was bred to the profession of a printer, and, after his arrival in this country engaged in several literary enterprises. He established the *Gentleman's Magazine*, now called "*Graham's*."

Wallack's Lyceum, in Broadway, is an exceedingly elegant little house, the style of the interior decoration is in excellent taste, and the effect of a full house is light, cheerful, exhilarating, and brilliant. James Wallack, the manager and proprietor, is the head of a large family remark-

able for the possession of theatrical talent. He was a celebrated actor in London more than thirty years ago, and is still one of the best players in his line,—the genteel heroes of melo-drama,—on the stage. But he rarely makes his appearance before the foot lights. Wallack's Lyceum is Burton's without Burton. Great attention is always paid to the production of pieces at this brilliant little house, and the costumes and scenery form an important part of the attraction. English comedy and domestic dramas form the chief attractions at Wallack's, and the house is generally full. The utmost order and decorum are maintained, both at this house and Burton's, and every thing offensive to the most delicate taste carefully excluded from the stage.

The National Theatre in Chatham-street has long been the resort of newsboys and apprentices, and the style of performances has been very similar to those of the "*Bowery*;" but, in a happy moment, the manager, a good natured native whom they call Captain Purdy, put Uncle Tom's Cabin upon his stage and at once raised his fortune and changed the character of his house. As it has played this piece twice a day for nearly six months, and is now the family resort of serious family parties, it would be rather hazardous to predict what its future course may be; the old Chatham Theatre was converted into a chapel, and Captain Purdy's is half way towards the same destiny.

Attached to Barnum's Museum there is a large, well arranged, and showily decorated theatre for dramatic representations, where domestic dramas of a moral character are performed, and a version of Uncle Tom adapted to Southern tastes has been a long time running. The "*St. Charles*," is a small theatre in the Bowery which was built for an actor named Chanfrau, who was the creator of the universally recognized character of Mose, the type of the New-York *gamin*.

The Italian Opera House in Astor Place has been adapted to the uses of the Mercantile Library Association; and the new opera house in Irving-place, which bids fair to be one of the most magnificent structures devoted to music in the world, is not yet sufficiently built to be described; but we shall describe it hereafter.

Since we commenced writing this article the most beautiful and spacious place of popular recreation in New-York has been swept out of existence by one of those sudden and disastrous conflagrations which have earned for New-York the appellation of the City of Fires. Metropolitan Hall,

which was unrivalled for its extent and splendor by any concert room in the world, together with the superb marble-fronted hotel in which it was inclosed, with all their wealth of embellishment and taste, the embodied forms of labor, genius, and skill were suddenly whiffed out of existence on the morning of the 8th of January. The engravings which we have the good fortune to possess of these superb structures are all that now remain, but the memories of those ornaments of our city.

Castle Garden, the unique, remains, where opera, music, and the drama are presented by turns. It is a hall of unequalled advantages for public exhibitions, which was originally a fort, but has long been appropriated to the refining arts of peace.

The Ethiopian minstrels have become established entertainments of the public, and among them are three permanent companies in Broadway; the Buckleys, Christy's, and Wood's, where the banjo is the first fiddle, and the loves of Dinah and Sambo form the burthen of the performances.

The Italian Opera, too, is now an established institution in the New World, but it leads a vagabondish kind of a life at present, and has no permanent house of its own, although one is erecting for it.

We are neither wealthy enough nor sufficiently educated in music to monopolize an Italian troupe at present, but are compelled to share this luxury in common with our neighbors of Boston, Philadelphia, Havana, Mexico, Valparaiso, and Lima. The Italian Opera is the highest order of theatrical entertainment, and demands a class of educated and wealthy people for its proper support more numerous than we have yet been able to boast of. There are never more than half a dozen good singers before the public at a time, and in competing for their services, we have to contend with, not the people of other cities, but with their monarchs, the Emperor Nicholases and Emperor Napoleons, who never hesitate to spend the money of their subjects to purchase pleasures for themselves.

The circus is still the most popular of public amusements, and it is conducted on a magnificent scale as a regular business speculation by enterprising citizens. The most famous riders now in Europe are graduates of the American ring. The Hippodrome, in the Fifth Avenue, was an attempt to transplant Franconi's from Paris. But the Hippodrome was too exotic to thrive in our climate, and, after a season of doubtful success, it has closed probably for ever.



Hippodrome.